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PRIZE

"INASMUCH."

SERIES

BY

JEANETTE W. JUDD.

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"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of these, ye did it not to me."

IF there was one thing Elizabeth Day prided herself upon, it was her thoroughness, that she was not a "dilettante" in anything; and certainly a girl who read Kant in the original and quoted Dante in the "soft Tuscan tongue" could not be called superficial.

To-day she had been hard at work since early morning finishing up a water-color sketch. It was coming out beautifully and she sighed a little impatiently when her maid announced one of her friends. However, she turned the easel to the wall, drew two easy chairs in front of the grate and welcomed her guest cordially.

"Evidently Kate has something on her mind," she thought, as Miss Forbes seated herself with a preoccupied air and drew a letter from her pocket.

"'Lizbeth," she began abruptly, "do you remember Mary Hadleigh?"

"Remember her? I don't think any of our class will ever forget her, for she took first honors all around and didn't leave a ghost of a chance for

the rest of us. Besides," she added warmly, "she was the sweetest little saint that ever breathed. What about her?"

"Well, listen. You know brother Jack has a sheep ranch out in Colorado, and he's always roaming over those Western wilds prospecting for mines and things. He'll date a letter in Idaho, finish it up in Texas, and between times send a telegram from San Francisco or Yankton. To-day this letter came from Choctaw Gulch, if you know where that is."

"I certainly do not. What has it to do with Mary? She is not out there, is she?"

Miss Forbes did not answer at once She unfolded the letter deliberately, than said with an odd inflection in her voice.

"Before I begin. 'Lizbeth, I wish you would look around this room. Look slowly—take it all in—then I'll read Jack's letter."

It was very queer, so unlike Kate's usual racy nonsense. What did she mean? Elizbeth looked curiously about her room to see if she could find an answer. The afternoon sun shone in through the south windows; its rays were flashed back from the silver fittings of the dressing table; they lit the face of her favorite Madonna with a new glory and lingered caressingly on the bowl of roses and mignonette whose fragrance filled the air. It was a beautful room and expressed well, she often thought complacently, her own personality.

"Well," she said, as she completed the survey, "what next?"

"This is next," said Miss Forbes quietly, and read from her letter:

"I met one of your school friends the other day under rather unusual circumstances. I was riding slowly over a bad bit of prairie, and as I came up alongside a dugout, I saw a woman on the lee side.

with a tub of clothes. It was blowing fifty miles an hour, and she was trying to rig up a clothes line. Just as she got one end tied fast and started for a pole with the other, the norther whisked round the other, lifted that tub like a thistle down, and in two seconds there wasn't a rag in sight. I roared; it was the neatest thing I ever saw. But when the little woman turned round and started back for the house, head down, fighting the wind and fighting the tears back, too—I didn't laugh any more. The next thing I knew Bill and I were loping over the prairie after that washing. We brought back all that were left in the county—"

Both girls broke out into an irresistible laugh.

"Just imagine Jack careering over the plain with his arms full of wet linen!" said Kate.

"It must have been more exciting than polo," said Elizabeth dryly.

Kate read on: "Perhaps you can take in my astonishment when I found my Madonna of the Tub was your friend, Miss Hadleigh (Mrs. Grant) In ten minutes we were chatting away like old cronies, with the small fry hovering around. My arm aches like the tooth-ache, writing, but I'm bound to persevere—('He's never wrote such a letter before in his life,' interjected Kate). It's time you kid-gloved saints and sisters in the effete East knew how some of your substitutes live out here. You know what these dugouts are like. I could stand up straight in this one and an inch to spare ('Jack's six feet one'). There was a lean-to curtained off where I suppose the dominie and his wife slept. The walls were lined with building paper; the cooking stove was on one side of the room, the table on the other; there were two chairs, the baby's cradle and a wash-bench. That was all, and about all there was room for. They are living here, two miles from

anything, because since the railroad struck the Gulch, nobody but a saloon keeper can pay the rents.

"Grant came home soon with a couple of bundles and I heard one youngster sing out, 'Oh, mamma, papa's got some meat!" and the other piped up, 'And ginger snaps!!' They were hushed up quickly, but I drew my own inferences. In the course of the evening I found out that their salary was overdue, they were in debt, and Grant had just two dollars and thirteen cents to lay in winter supplies with.

"We men peeled potatoes for supper and talked political economy and evolution. Grant's a Yale man, same fraternity as I, and as level-headed a fellow as I've met. The menu for supper was bread and potatoes, with fried mush and coffee for dessert. No butter and no milk. They're raising the infant on condensed milk, so the rest of the family can't indulge.

"I was making my adieux about nine o'clock, when some men stopped at the house and wanted to know the way to the Gulch. Grant asked them in and I offered to pilot them, but Grant got in a prayer meeting first. He did it so easily that we all dropped on it as if we went to them every night in the week (I havn't been in one for ten years). We sang some hymns; Grant read some verses that screwed into a fellow's conscience—and then he prayed. I tell you Kate, I never meant to be a 'professor'—but if I could get hold of the sort of religion that man has, I'd go for it. He has a grip on the Almighty that means something. I haven't any use for the gilt-edged religion that prays in plush pews and don't pay its missionaries (I don't mean you and mother, Katchen), but to know God—to believe—"

But Kate sprang up with a choking sob, "I

can't read any more 'Lizbeth. To think of Jack, dear, darling Jack, wanting to be a Christian, and mamma and I have been praying for that so long—and the first one to make him think is a home missionary—and in debt—and this suit cost me a hundred dollars for making—"

The tears were coming too fast to be held back, and more afraid of Elizabeth's cool sarcasm than of anything else in the world, Kate did not try to finish her sentence, but ran down stairs and disappeared as suddenly as she came.

Elizabeth could not go on with her painting that afternoon. The light was still perfect; Kate's call had not been a long one; but after trying a few half-hearted touches, she put her colors away, and dressed for a walk. As she passed through the hall her mother called to her:

"Elizabeth, are you going shopping?"

"I think not this afternoon, mother," she answered, hardly knowing why she felt so unlike anything of the sort.

She walked slowly down town in the brilliant sunlight, fighting a battle with her conscience and strangely at variance with her own self and the beauty of the day

"Why do they send such people out to those Western savages?" she argued indignantly. "I believe in adaption of means to ends. Who would think of using a delicate watch spring to move a trip hammer (with an approving mental pat at the metaphor), and cultivated people have no right to bury themselves in that way. It's sheer waste."

"But," answered conscience, "a watch spring could carry the electric current which would move a thousand trip hammers, and God did not think it a waste to give His only Son to save sinners. Besides, men like Jack Forbes are not savages."

Elizabeth winced. She knew why Jack had

chosen to "bury" himself out in the indefinite limitless "West." It was a sore point and she shifted her argument.

"Well, if they do send men and women out there to preach, they have no right to let them freeze and starve. Why don't they pay up their salaries promptly, like any respectable business firm? I don't see why everything in Church work should be done in such a shiftless, haphazard way."

"Who make up the church?" answered conscience sternly, "Men and women, like yourself, and upon each individual member lies the burden of the responsibility. Inasmuch as each one of you has not done his or her duty in this matter, 'ye have not done it unto me,' and the sin lies at your door. 'You cannot shift the blame upon a "Board" and say "I am innocent; see ye to it."' What have *you* done Elizabeth Day?"

And then, as suddenly as the light flashed upon Saul of Tarsus, God sent an arrow of conviction into her soul. The Sunday before had been the one after Thanksgiving, and for years this day had been chosen, above all others, for the annual Home Mission collection. Usually, she put ten dollars on the plate—she prided herself upon her liberality—but she had forgotten it this time, and one solitary dollar bill lay in her purse, with a check her father had given her the night before.

The pastor had made an especial appeal for the debt of the Board. Very tenderly and solemnly he had pressed home God's claim upon the silver and gold of His people, and still more earnestly the honor of being "workers together with Him," and the sacred joy of giving because he gave Himself for us.

Heart and conscience had pleaded together for the check that lay snugly in the dainty purse, but

she had resisted. She had excellent excuses, "Perhaps father would not like it," and, with the pride which apes humility, "It would look like affectation for me to give a hundred dollars," and finally—stiffening her resolution as the plate passed by, enriched with the one dollar bill—"It would be giving from mere impulse, just because I am affected by the sermon."

It all came back to her now, argument, appeal, resistance, with a burning sense of guilt and shame. She walked home, fighting no longer, but crying out for forgiveness and light. "I have been called a Christian nine years," she thought bitterly, "and I never brought one soul to Jesus, and I never denied myself one single thing to help any one else to do it."

From that time a new life began for Elizabeth Day. It was characteristic of her that she was not content with merely giving more money. She gave herself "soul and body, a living sacrifice," and giving "until she felt it" was only one phase of the rich and manifold development of the spiritual life springing from the full consecration. Life was radiant with new meaning when painting, study, social duties were all done, "as unto the Lord."

And if, as the years ran on, and she became a leader and worker in every good cause, some of the old interests were crowded out, there could be no regret, for the lesser joys were merged in the infinitely greater—even the "joy of the Lord."

Price 1 cent each. 75 cents per hundred.